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The Minnesota Historical Society,

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SAINT PAUL, MINN.

We take this method of informing our friends and correspondents of the designs, present condition and wants of the Minnesota Historical Society :

Objects and Organization.—The Society was organized in 1849, by a few of the pioneers of the Territory, and incorporated by an act of the first Territorial Legislature, approved October 20, 1849, thus being the first literary institution organized in the Territory; and its "library," then only a few volumes, was the first ever established in Minnesota. The original charter of the Society stated its objects to be: "the collection and preservation of a library, mineralogical and geological specimens, Indian curiosities and other matters and things connected with, and calculated to illustrate and perpetuate the history and settlement of said Territory." The amended charter of 1856 enacted: "The objects of said Society; with the enlarged powers and duties herein provided, shall be in addition to the collection and preservation of publications, manuscripts, antiquities, curiosities and other things pertaining to the Social, Political and Natural History of Minnesota, to cultivate among the citizens thereof, a knowledge of the useful and liberal Arts, Science and Literature."

The work of this Society may therefore be formulated thus :

I. (1) The Collection, (2) the Preservation, and (3) the publication of materials for the history of Minnesota and its people.

II. The collection and management of a library containing useful works of reference on the most valuable departments of knowledge.

III. The diffusion among the citizens of the State, of useful knowledge.

Its Progress.—In the early days of the Territory, owing to its want of means, the sparse population and its poverty, and the infancy of the commonwealth generally, the Society accomplished but little beyond collecting some information regarding the early history of this region and printing the same in several pamphlet volumes. In 1864 it had only 840 volumes in its Library. It was then reorganized, and with the aid of a small annual appropriation from the State, since enlarged, has been able to make very gratifying progress.

Its Present Condition.—It has now comfortable apartments in the State Capitol, a building believed to be fire proof: a sufficient income to pay its current expenses, granted partly by the State and partly contributed by its members; the largest and most valuable library in the State, containing many thousand volumes of choice works; together with a cabinet, or museum of historical and archaeological curiosities, and a large number of historical pictures, engravings, manuscripts, etc. An endowment fund of several thousand dollars, accumulated by gifts and membership fees, and two lots, eligibly situated, on which we hope, at no distant day, to erect a fire proof building for our use.

The Library now contains over 50,000 volumes, bound and unbound, and is increasing rapidly. The works are all useful and appropriate in such a collection, most of them being choice and valuable, and many very rare and costly. On *Minnesota* it

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contains almost every known work bearing directly or indirectly on that subject, and our design is to make it complete. On the *history of the Northwest*, and of the West generally, it is quite complete, embracing many, or most of the voyages and explorations of the early French explorers and missionaries in "Nouvelle France," or "Louisiana" and the Relations of the Jesuit fathers, with the curious and crude maps of this then almost unknown land. Many of these works are now excessively rare and difficult to procure, and have been collected only by years of vigilant search among the book-dealers in America and Europe. On *general American history*, in all its periods, our collection offers over 3,000 volumes, (although probably ninety per cent. of our library relates to America). In the documentary works, State papers and archival publications of the general government, and of the various older states, our collection is very full. We have the *Congressional Documents* complete, for nearly half a century back. All the annals of Congress, Gales & Seaton's debates, Niles Register, the Congressional Globe and Record, and other works of this class, offering rich treasures of material to the student of our national history, and questions relating to it, while we have also several thousand pamphlets on *American politics and national questions*, of every period and issue, essays, speeches, treatises, etc., throwing light on every step of our country's career. On the *Revolutionary Period* we have an unusually fine collection; while on the truly historic slavery struggle which agitated the American nation so long, and of the Rebellion in which it culminated, we have several thousand works. We have also most of the publications of the historical and other learned societies of America and some in Europe. In *American genealogy*, one of our specialties, our library is notably rich, containing over ~~200~~ volumes of separate family histories, besides many collective works and about 2,000 volumes on biography, mostly American. In statistical and geographical works, books relating to our Indian tribes, and to ethnology and archaeology generally, in bibliography, periodicals, travels and voyages in America, and in general literature, it is unusually strong, as well as in social science, political economy, English history, etc., and other departments. It is also the depository (and the only one in the State) of the publications of the U. S. Patent Office. We have also several hundred *atlases and maps*, many of them very rare. The whole library has been thoroughly catalogued on the "card" plan, by an expert of the highest skill and its catalogue has been printed in two volumes. It is open from 8 A. M. to 6 P. M. daily, in charge of experienced librarians. Its use is entirely free to all, without any restrictions, except that the books are for reference only, and are not loaned. The library is valued, if any definite value can be placed on such property, at \$15,000. 100

Minnesota Newspapers.—One of the specialties of the Society is the collection and preservation of the newspapers of the State. We have, through our efforts in this respect for over thirty years, accumulated a very complete collection of nearly 3,000 bound volumes, reaching back to the first issue of the "Minnesota Pioneer," April 26, 1849. Of the greatest part of these journals, which we have preserved thus, we have the only files in existence, and they are being constantly referred to by persons from all parts of the State, in pursuit of dates, facts, etc., to be found only in such a shape. They form a repository of the *materials for the history* of the State, and of its people, of priceless value a value which will enhance as years roll on. They are kept in a fire proof room. Newspaper publishers are urged to send their papers to us regularly by mail, to be preserved in our collection. We ought to have, and preserve, every issue of every journal in the State. In addition to our Minnesota newspapers, we have sets of those published in Chicago, New York, Boston and London (the latter commencing with the year 1865) and many other cities.

Museum.—At the time of the fire which destroyed the State capitol, March 1, 1881, and which did considerable injury to our library, we lost nearly all the interesting and valuable cabinet of historical and archaeological curiosities which we had at that time, most of it relating to the Indian tribes of this State. We have since accumulated a new collection, to which we invite contributions from those who have such relics or curiosities. (See No. 7 in "Donations Especially Desired," below.)

Publications.—The Society has published ~~12~~ volumes of its historical collections. They are handsomely printed octavo volumes, of 400 to 500 pages each, the whole forming a valuable collection of works relating to the history of the State, which should

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be in the library of every citizen who is a book collector. The set is sold, either bound or unbound, at \$10.00 (cost price) or \$2.50 for single volumes. Those who desire them uncut, so as to place in handsome bindings, can secure sets in this condition; we will also exchange them for good books not already in our library. A descriptive circular also will be sent to any one wishing further information regarding them. The Society prints a biennial report to the Legislature, which will be sent to any one requesting a copy.

Endowment Fund.—This fund, referred to in a preceding paragraph, has been raised by the sale of life memberships, at \$25 each, and by donations. It now amounts to several thousand dollars. Its object is to create a Fund, the interest of which only shall be used in the purchase and binding of books. Additions to it are solicited, either by the purchase of memberships, by gift, or by bequest. Any citizen of the State is entitled to become an active member, on application to the Secretary.

Proposed Building for the Society.—Reference was made, *ante*, to the building lot of the Society. These were purchased by a subscription of the members in 1855, for the sum of \$1,500, in hopes that the Society would be enabled to erect thereon a fire proof building for its use, but up to this time it has not been able to do so. The lots are now valued at \$50,000 or more. An effort has been made recently to secure a Legislative appropriation sufficient to erect the long projected building, but the finances of the State do not yet permit of such an outlay. We are in hopes of soon securing it, however, or if not, of receiving gifts of money from those interested in our objects, sufficient to do so.

Present Resources of the Society.—From the foregoing statement it will be seen that the Society has no *certain* resources, except the amount appropriated to it by the State. While this income enables it to pay its current expenses, and also expend more or less each year in the purchase and binding of books, and in publishing its collections, it can increase its library but slowly, considering the constantly increasing demands on us for rare and costly classes of works which we do not now have, and cannot easily procure, out of our small income. *Our funds for purchasing should be doubled or trebled without delay*, in order to enable us to keep pace with the increasing calls on us, growing out of the rapidly enlarging population of the State. As the State cannot increase its present allowance, we must look to private beneficence for an enlargement of our income.

We are therefore prompted to appeal for aid to the citizens of our State, who should feel a pride in the success of an institution manifestly so useful and creditable to them—as well as to the generous patrons of public libraries and other public institutions, and to the friends of learning and historical research everywhere, for contributions to our Library, or such other aid as they may prefer to extend.

Donations Especially Desired.—Books and pamphlets on American History, Biography and Genealogy, particularly those relating to the West; Works on our Indian Tribes, and American Archæology and Ethnology; Statistical and Scientific Publications of States or Societies; Books or Pamphlets relating to the Great Rebellion; privately printed works; Newspapers; Maps and Charts; Engravings; Autographs; Coins; Antiquities; and Encyclopedias, Dictionaries and Bibliographical works of every kind. Entire sets of works are especially solicited, or collections of books on any subject, but single volumes, or pamphlets even will be gratefully received. Especially do we desire

Everything Relating to our own State, viz:

1. Travels and Explorations; City Directories; Copies of the earlier Laws and Journals of our Legislature; Ordinances of Cities; and, in short, every book, on any subject, printed in the State, or elsewhere, relating to it.
2. Pamphlets of all kinds; Catalogues of Minnesota Colleges and other institutions of Learning; Annual Reports of Societies; Sermons and Addresses delivered in this State; Minutes of Church Conventions, Synods, or other Ecclesiastical Bodies of Minnesota; Political Addresses; Railroad and Board of Trade Reports, and every other Pamphlet relating to this State.



3. Files of Minnesota Newspapers and Magazines, especially complete volumes of past years, or single numbers even. Publishers are earnestly requested to contribute their publications regularly, all of which will be carefully preserved and bound.
4. Materials for Minnesota History; Old Letters, Journals, and manuscript Narratives of the Pioneers of Minnesota; Original Papers on the Early History and Settlement of the Territory; Adventures and Conflicts during the Indian War or the late Rebellion; Biographies of the Pioneers of every County, either living or deceased, together with their Portraits and Autographs; a sketch of the settlement of every town and village in the State, with names of the first settlers. We solicit articles on every subject connected with Minnesota history.
5. Maps of Town Sites or Counties, of any date; Views and Engravings of buildings or historic places; Drawings or Photographs of Scenery; Paintings; Portraits, etc., connected with Minnesota history.
6. Curiosities of all kinds for our Museum; Coins; Medals; Paintings; Portraits; Engravings; Statues; War Relics; Autographs; Letters of distinguished persons, etc.
7. Facts illustrative of our Indian Tribes; their History, Characteristics, Religion, etc.; Sketches of their prominent Chiefs, Orators and Warriors, together with contributions of Indian Weapons, Costumes, Ornaments, Curiosities and Implements. Also, Stone Axes, Spears, Arrow-Heads, Pottery, or other relics of pre-historic races.

In brief, *everything* that, by the most liberal construction, can illustrate the History of Minnesota or its people; its early settlement; its progress, or present condition, which will be of value or interest to succeeding generations. All works presented to our Library will be acknowledged in our biennial reports, and will be carefully preserved for the use of the public of the State.

We hope that a generous and prompt response will be made by those receiving this circular. Communications or Donations may be addressed to the Secretary of the Society, St. Paul. All persons sending us gifts will be placed on our exchange list and receive the publications of the Society in return.

Officers of the Society.

Gen. Henry H. Sibley, President; Hon. Alex. Ramsey, ~~First Vice-President~~; Capt. Russell Blakeley, ~~Second Vice-President~~; Henry P. Upham, Treasurer; J. Fletcher Williams, Secretary and Librarian.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

4-22-89.

Charles E. Sibley, Jr.

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